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INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 AMMAN 003583

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FOR NEA/ELA, NEA/I, H FOR MSMITH AND AMACDERMOTT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/26/2017

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SUBJECT: IRAQIS IN JORDAN TELL CODEL LEVIN - DUMP MALIKI,
SUPPORT PARLIAMENT

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

1. (C) In multiple meetings with prominent Iraqis living or transiting Jordan, CODEL Levin was told that the U.S. should stop supporting the Maliki government and should support a parliamentary move by moderate, non-sectarian forces in the Iraqi parliament to bring about a new government, likely to be led by former Prime Ministers Ibrahim al-Ja'afari or Iyad Allawi. End Summary.

2. (U) CODEL Levin visited Jordan on August 19. The Senate Armed Services Committee delegation consisted of Senators Carl Levin and John Warner, Majority Staff Director Richard DeBobes, Minority Staff Member William Caniano, Majority Staff Member Daniel Cox and military escorts COL Michael Barbero, COL Frederick Hodges and LT Matthew Shaffer.

Iraqis in Amman Lobby for Change in Baghdad

3. (C) The CODEL's activities in Amman focused primarily on speaking with prominent Iraqis either living in or transiting Amman. The CODEL met separately with: Saleh al-Mutlaq, Head of the Iraqi National Dialogue Front; Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Salam al-Zawba'i; Iraqi MP from the Iraqi National Forces bloc Muhammad al-Daini; Iraqi MP Adnan Pachachi; and former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi (Pachachi and Allawi met with CODEL jointly).

4. (C) All of the interlocutors argued that the U.S. should stop supporting Maliki, that he was unable to bring about reconciliation, and that the U.S. should support a parliamentary move to replace the Maliki government with a non-sectarian government that could garner a parliamentary majority from the Dialogue Front, Tawafuq, Fadhila, Iraqi List, parts of Da'wa and the Sadrists, and Kurdish parties. As candidates for prime minister, all of the interlocutors brought up the names of Ibrahim al-Ja'afari, Iyad Allawi, Adel Abdel-Mehdi and Nadim al-Jabiri.

The New Prime Minister Should Be...

5. (C) The CODEL's Iraqi interlocutors indicated support for Allawi as a post-Maliki PM, but Mutlaq, Zawba'i and Daini all said that Allawi would not be able to garner support in the parliament because of his conflict with the Sadrists. As an alternative, Mutlaq and Daini suggested former Prime Minister Ja'afari who, according to Daini, could get the support of Allawi, the Sadrists and Muqtada al-Sadr. Allawi and Pachachi disagreed, saying that Ja'afari's period as PM was the most disastrous period in Iraq -- the time when militias

and sectarianism began to flourish.

¶6. (C) In addition to Allawi and Ja'afari, Adel Abdel-Mehdi and Nadim Jabiri were mentioned as potential PM candidates. Daini was dismissive of Abdel-Mehdi, describing him as much worse than Maliki in terms of sectarianism and ties to Iran; other interlocutors viewed Abdel-Mehdi as capable but sectarian, and thus undesirable. Mutlaq and Zawba'i said that Jabiri, while espousing a moderate ideology, did not have a sufficient constituency in the parliament. Zawba'i raised the utility of finding a moderate within the Sadrist camp for PM, but did not suggest any names.

Hope for a Democratic Coup Via Parliament

¶7. (C) The Iraqis all shared with the CODEL their support for a democratic maneuver in the parliament in which nationalist parliamentarians would unite as, in Daini's words, "the only salvation army in Iraq." To accomplish such a parliamentary move, each of the Iraqi interlocutors called on the U.S. to stop supporting Maliki, and to support the parliament, which would vote no confidence in the Maliki government.

¶8. (C) Mutlaq, Zawba'i, Daini, Allawi and Pachachi all were convinced that they could muster the votes needed to topple the Maliki government via a parliamentary no-confidence motion, especially if parliamentarians who were living outside of Iraq were given American protection on their return. To secure an anti-Maliki, moderate and non-sectarian majority in the parliament, Allawi, Pachachi and Mutlaq emphatically urged the U.S. to talk with Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Kurdish parties in Iraq to support non-sectarian Iraqis and to bolster that support within the

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parliament. (Note: Allawi and Mutlaq told the CODEL that the U.S. instructed Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the UAE to keep out of Iraqi political affairs, and that this hampered efforts to bolster support for moderate, non-sectarian forces.)

¶9. (C) Allawi also told the CODEL that Maliki could even remain PM, but with a new government that is truly one of national unity and that includes competent and honest ministers. Zawba'i added that the government should be composed of technocrats and not political leaders. Mutlaq and Zawba'i also argued for a UN conference that would support a post-Maliki Iraqi government (following Maliki's parliamentary ouster).

On Sadr

¶10. (C) The CODEL asked their interlocutors where Muqtada al-Sadr's allegiances lie, and were told that Sadr was non-sectarian and that he and part of his movement could be brought into an anti-Maliki, non-sectarian coalition. Mutlaq told the CODEL that Sadr often traveled to Iran because the Arabs were "not clever enough to contain him," which they could, according to Mutlaq, by offering him a limited measure of symbolic support (such as welcoming him in their countries by offering him a place to stay and showing him a modest level of respect). Instead, intimidated Mutlaq, Sadr is being driven further into the hands of Iran. Mutlaq argued that Iran was not in Sadr's heart, but that he feared pro-Iranian members in the JAM. Allawi also argued that Sadr is against sectarianism, and that Sadr's people can be brought into a non-sectarian national unity government.

Sectarianism, Democracy, and Iran in Iraq

¶11. (C) There was unanimity among the Iraqi interlocutors regarding the failures of the Maliki government. They each described the government as unwilling and unable to foster

unity among all Iraqis; Mutlaq told the CODEL that under Maliki there was no chance for passing a de-ba'athification reform law. All independently argued that the Iraqi army and police are infiltrated by the militias, and that the Maliki government and President Jalal Talabani (whom Mutlaq described as a cartoon character) do not care. Daini told the CODEL that the government was no more than sectarian death squads and militias. Mutlaq argued that alliances (and successes) with the Sunni tribes would be short-lived if sectarian militias replace Al-Qa'ida in Sunni tribal areas, a scenario Mutlaq described as possible under Maliki. All said that the Iraqi people have lost confidence in the Maliki government.

¶12. (C) Mutlaq and Zawba'i added that the people have also lost confidence in Islamist parties and have lost confidence that Islamists (Shia or Sunni) can run Iraq successfully. The Iraqi people, they argued, want a non-sectarian, moderate government. Mutlaq said that Iraq can never be stable with an Islamist government, and that democracy cannot be injected into Iraq, especially when the marja'iyah is issuing political orders. He also claimed that Tariq al-Hashimi has lost Sunni support. Zawba'i emphasized that the "Shia brothers" want a religious state but that Iraq cannot be run by those wearing turbans. He told the CODEL that Iraqi statesmen "must secure the rights of Iraqi Jews just as fully as the rights of Sayyid Al-Sisatani's son - if they cannot do that, they cannot be statesmen."

¶13. (C) All five Iraqi leaders warned of Iran's rising influence, including 1 billion dollars worth of investments in Iraq as well as 12 television stations. They claimed that Persian was being spoken on the streets of Basra. They also made the point that the only forces supporting Maliki were the U.S. and Iran. Daini said that Iranian Revolutionary Guards and the Jaish Al-Quds were in Iraq killing Americans. Allawi and Pachachi told the CODEL that the "most dangerous thing facing Iraq and the region is Iran." Zawba'i emphasized that economic and security vacuums in Iraq are being filled by Iran and that this would increase as sectarianism becomes more entrenched.

¶14. (C) All of the Iraqis whom the CODEL met in Amman urged the U.S. to stop supporting Maliki and to support non-sectarian moderates. The CODEL responded by arguing that the U.S. cannot choose the Iraqi Prime Minister and that Iraqis are responsible for their political future. Mutlaq summed up the consensus of the Iraqi leaders, rhetorically asking, "who are we, who is Maliki?" He told the CODEL to

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"be practical, and accept the fact that the U.S. is everything in Iraq."

Should We Stay or Should We Go?

¶15. (C) Opinions varied on the question of U.S. withdrawal from Iraq. The CODEL told interlocutors that some sort of withdrawal was likely in the near future, but that it was impossible to say when or how many troops will be withdrawn. Zawba'i said that a withdrawal before fixing the problems would be a disaster and would give Iraqis more reasons to hate America; such a move, according to Zawba'i, would ruin any future chances of friendship between Iraq and the U.S. He stressed that security vacuums in Iraq are, and in the future would be, filled by Iran. Daini argued for a timetable for withdrawal, and said that more than half of the parliament would support such a timetable - which would not mean a precipitous withdrawal. Mutlaq's position was that if U.S. policy were to remain the same, then the U.S. should leave as soon as possible, even though that would make things more complicated. He added that if there were a change in policy (meaning withdrawing support for Maliki), the U.S. should stay. He told the CODEL that he would rather have the U.S. leave than to have the U.S. continue to support Maliki

and stay.

An Inopportune Dinner Encounter

¶16. (C) During the CODEL's dinner meeting with Allawi and Pachachi and as the two leaders were criticizing sectarianism in Iraq and the current government's enabling role in sectarianism, Iraqi Finance Minister Bayan Jabr Solagh (also a former Interior Minister) entered the restaurant. Following pleasant greetings, Allawi and Pachachi continued to rail against the government and Jabr personally under whose Interior Ministry mandate, they said, militias and sectarian violence grew. Simultaneously, Emboffs overheard Jabr criticizing and mocking Allawi at the next table. Jabr told his dinner guests that the opposition wanted to bring in Allawi or Ja'afari to replace Maliki, and that Jabr had enough evidence to indict Allawi for corruption and would present that evidence "at the right time."

¶17. (C) Allawi and Pachachi told the CODEL that they were considering an early September visit to Washington, to influence the results and fallout of the September Iraq progress report.

Comment

¶18. (C) The CODEL's Iraqi interlocutors in Amman aggressively sought to make the case that the Maliki government is not part of the solution, but instead is the entire problem. Their view, of course, belies the fact that the narrow forces they represent - the (mostly) Sunni expatriate opposition - are busily and unhelpfully grinding their own axes in an effort to make predictions of a weak Maliki government self-fulfilling.

¶19. (SBU) CODEL Levin did not clear this message prior to departure from Amman.

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